



The Town of WESTFORD Massachusetts

Town Manager's Newsletter

May 2009



Jodi Ross
Town Manager
978-692-5500

**Annual Town
Meeting is
Saturday, May
9, 2009 at 10:00
AM**

**Abbot School
Gymnasium
25 Depot Street
Westford, MA
01886**

**Visit
westfordma.gov
for current
news and
information.**

Dear Westford Residents,

We are finally winding down the ice storm debris cleanup process. I have heard from many of you how pleased you are that the town provided assistance in this massive and unprecedented effort...on to warmer temperatures!!

With the warmer temperatures comes our annual town meeting, which will be held this Saturday, May 9th, at the Abbot Elementary School. As I stated in April's newsletter, there are several interesting projects underway and your input and vote are very important. April's newsletter explains each article in detail, and all related documents are available on our website for your perusal.

A couple of the more significant articles include whether to expand and renovate the Town Hall and Cameron Senior Center, whether to implement a waste reduction program, and deciding the future of the Roudenbush Community Center Committee's relationship with the town. Of course all of the articles facing the town meeting are important, and I strongly urge you to attend as your vote does count.

I look forward to seeing you at town meeting. Thank you to all of the town volunteers, town officials, and staff who worked so hard on preparing all of the background materials to present to the voters at town meeting. The efforts of these folks are truly inspiring!

Sincerely,

Jodi Ross



Health Department News

H1N1 Influenza Update

New cases of swine flu (H1N1) continue to appear but they seem to be milder than previously expected. Many communities in our immediate area have received confirmation of positive cases, but patients are responding well to treatment. We have no cases in Westford as of today (5/6). Latest information from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH):

- Epidemiological information from case investigations and surveillance system suggests that this new strain has already spread more widely in school and day care populations and will continue, at least for a time, to be transmitted from person to person, including children.
- Available information from local health care providers, emergency departments and hospitals, as well as information from other states, suggests that the severity of illness from the swine-origin influenza A H1N1 virus is not greater than the typical seasonal influenza that circulates in our community every year. DPH will continue

to monitor carefully in case the severity of illness changes.

The symptoms of swine influenza A are similar to the symptoms of normal human flu and include:

- fever
- cough
- runny nose
- sore throat
- body aches
- headache
- chills and fatigue
- Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting

Swine influenza **cannot** be transmitted from eating pork or pork products and it is safe to eat properly handled and cooked pork or pork products.

We are still in the early stages of this outbreak and the situation may change. MDPH will continue to monitor information both locally and nationally and continually assess whether changes are needed in these swine-origin influenza A H1N1 disease control measures.

It is important to know that every year over 36,000 people die of regular influenza. It is also important to understand that the virus can mutate and become more severe. So, we ask that residents take

responsibility for containment of this potential threat. Residents should follow these simple yet effective measures to decrease chances of exposure to the H1N1 virus:

•Wash your hands and use an alcohol hand sanitizer product often. This is one of the most effective measures.

•Use good cough etiquette (into elbow, not hands) or cover mouth and nose with tissues when you sneeze or cough. Throw away tissues immediately.

•Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

•Avoid hugging and kissing ill persons.

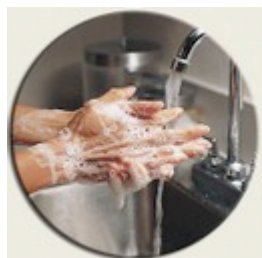
•Contact your medical provider if you become ill to determine if testing and treatment are necessary.

•Disinfect items that you touch frequently such as doorknobs, telephones, etc.

•Ensure that personal preparedness plans and kits are up to date, including medications, food and water supplies for the family.

•Stay home if ill!

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"Wash your hands and use an alcohol hand sanitizer product often. This is one of the most effective measures."



Health Department News

(H1N1 Influenza Update continued)

Testing protocols have recently changed. Individuals with *mild* illness may be advised to stay at home. MDPH does not feel at this time that they need to be tested or treated unless they meet one of the high-risk criteria:

- Those with flu-like febrile respiratory illness or sepsis-like syndrome requiring hospitalization
- Those at high risk of complications with influenza, including:
- Children less than 2 years old;
- Persons aged 65 years or older;
- Adults and children who have immunosuppression (including immunosuppression caused by medications or by HIV);
- Adults and children who have chronic pulmonary, cardiovascular, hepatic, hematological, neurologic, neuromuscular, or metabolic disorders;
- Pregnant women;
- Children and adolescents (less than 18 years) who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy who might be at risk for experiencing Reye syndrome after influenza virus infection

For additional updates on cases and guidance please see the Board of Health web page at www.westfordma.gov.

As we receive additional information that might impact Westford, the Health Department will post it on the web and send it through the Board of Health list-serve

A special phone line has been set up by the state to address questions on swine flu. That number is **2-1-1**. Please call this number or feel free to contact the Health Department if you have any questions.

HEALTH FAIR AND SAFETY DAY-MAY 16TH

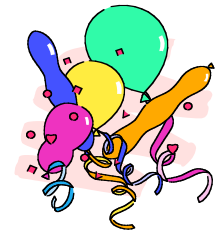
In conjunction with the Apple Blossom Festival, the Westford Health Department in collaboration with area health care providers, hospitals and organizations, will host a Health Fair and Safety Day on Saturday, **May 16th from 8-12 in the Abbot gym**. The fair will include 15 free health screenings and education on a variety of health issues. The free screenings will include: vision, glaucoma, hearing, lung function, chiropractic, dental, blood sugar, blood pressure, bone density, body fat analysis, PSA, podiatry, thyroid function and cholesterol. **(Please note that the cholesterol screening requires a 12**

hour fast.) Educational materials and demonstrations will be available on a variety of topics including: H1N1 flu, Lyme disease, eco-safe landscaping to prevent ticks, fitness, nutrition and weight loss, environmental and health information, tobacco and substance abuse prevention. Important information on Senior Care and respite support will be available. Learn more about Reiki and massage by receiving a free mini treatment! Police Department will be providing car seat checks. Free tetanus shots will be offered by the Health Department! Children's activities will also be provided including face painting

and games! Receive a free Child ID's kit. Reservations are not required. Come join us for a fun filled family day and learn more about your health!

To facilitate parking, the Abbot school entrance, which is closer to Cummings, will be open to allow access during the parade. Seniors can also park at the Senior Center as a van will be available to shuttle residents to the fair.

We are thankful for the **Westford Rotary Club** for co- sponsoring the event!



"Health Fair and Safety Day on Saturday, May 16th from 8-12 in the Abbot gym."



Health Department News LYME DISEASE AND WEST NILE VIRUS INFORMATION



"The single most important thing you can do is check yourself for ticks once a day"

As summer approaches and outdoor activities and recreational sports increase, we encourage families to take precautions to prevent tick and mosquito borne illness. The peak time for exposure to West Nile Virus and Lyme disease extends through the fall.

LYME DISEASE

Reported cases of Lyme disease continue to grow in Westford. Over 60 cases were reported last year, in comparison to 2004, when we received only 10 reported cases. Lyme disease is caused by bacteria. Initial symptoms usually begin 3 to 30 days after a person is bitten by an infected deer tick and may include an expanding rash at the site of the bite and/or flu-like symptoms. If left untreated, the bacteria can spread to almost any site in the body and can cause arthritis, neurological difficulties, and/or heart problems. Cases of Lyme disease occur throughout Massachusetts.

Ticks go through a multiple-stage life cycle that includes larval, nymphal, and adult stages. Ticks are most active during warm weather months (May-June for nymphs and October-May for adult ticks), but can be active **year-round** when temperatures are above freezing. Ticks are

generally found in grassy, brushy, or wooded areas. Ticks **do not** fly or jump. They attach to animals or people that come into direct contact with them. Deer tick nymphs are the size of a poppy seed and deer tick adults are the size of a sesame seed.

Protect your family and pets from tick bites. **Prevention begins with you!** Follow these tips if you live, work, or spend leisure time in an area likely to have ticks:

•The single most important thing you can do is check yourself for ticks once a day.

Favorite places ticks like to go on your body include areas between the toes, back of the knees, groin, armpits, and neck, along the hairline, and behind the ears. Remember to check your children and pets, too. Remove any attached tick as soon as possible.

•Stick to main pathways and the center of trails when hiking.

•Wear long-sleeved, light colored shirts and long pants tucked into your socks.

•Use repellents that contain DEET on your clothes or exposed skin, or those that contain permethrin on your clothes.

•Talk to your veterinarian about the best ways to protect your pets and livestock from ticks.

There is currently no human vaccine available to protect against Lyme disease.

Reduce the number of ticks around your home.

•You don't have to be walking in the woods to be bitten by a tick. You can be in your own backyard! You can reduce the number of ticks around your home by following these tips:

•Keep grass cut short.

•Remove leaf litter and brush from around your home.

•Prune low lying bushes to let in more sunlight.

•Keep woodpiles and birdfeeders off the ground and away from your home.

•Keep the plants around stone walls cut short.

•Use a three-foot wide woodchip, mulch or gravel barrier where your lawn meets the woods. Ticks are less likely to cross the barrier into the lawn because they are prone to drying out. It also serves as a reminder that people who cross the barrier into the wooded area may be at higher risk of getting ticks.

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LYME DISEASE AND WEST NILE VIRUS INFORMATION

- Ask your local nursery about plants to use in your yard that do not attract deer.
- Use deer fencing (for yards 15 acres or more).
- If you choose to use a pesticide to reduce the number of ticks on your property, hire a licensed applicator experienced with tick control. Your local landscaper or arborist may be a licensed applicator. In general, good tick control can be achieved with no more than two pesticide applications in any year. When selecting an applicator, ask if they will provide:
- A written pest control plan that includes information on the pesticide to be used.
- Information about non-chemical pest control alternatives.
- Signs to be posted around the property after the application.

If you find a tick on yourself or a family member or pet:

The tick should be carefully removed as soon as possible. The longer an infected tick remains attached to a person or animal, the higher the likelihood of disease transmission. Promptly remove any attached tick using fine-point tweezers. Grip the mouthparts of the tick as close to the skin as possible. The tick should not be squeezed or twisted, but pulled straight outward with steady, gentle pressure. You should *not* apply kerosene,

petroleum jelly, nail polish, or a hot match tip to remove the tick. These measures are not effective and may result in injury. Circle the calendar date and note where on the body the tick was removed. You may want to save the tick for identification. The tick may be kept either securely sealed within a small plastic bag or attached with clear tape to a piece of paper. For individuals who do not wish to keep the tick, it can be either drowned in rubbing alcohol or flushed down the toilet. Whenever someone removes an attached deer tick from his/her body, he/she should watch for the appearance of rash, fever or flu-like symptoms and immediately seek the advice of a health care provider should any symptoms occur, especially if the tick was attached for more than 24 hours. Your physician may choose to treat you following a deer tick bite.

WEST NILE VIRUS

Risk can be decreased by reducing an individual's exposure to mosquitoes and taking special precautions during periods of higher probability of infection. WNV is a virus transmitted most commonly through mosquitoes. The virus grows in birds and is spread from bird to bird by infected mosquitoes. If mosquitoes infected with the virus bite horses or humans, the animal or person can become sick. WNV causes illness that

varies from a mild fever to more serious disease like encephalitis or meningitis. Persons older than 50 years of age have a higher risk of developing severe illness. In a small percentage of people infected by the virus, the disease can be fatal. We recommend that all residents follow these simple measures within their families to reduce the chance of being infected:

• **Avoid Outdoor Activity During Peak Mosquito Hours.**

The hours from dusk to dawn are peak mosquito biting times for many mosquitoes. Take extra care to use repellent and protective clothing during evening and early morning hours -- or consider avoiding outdoor activities during these times.

• **Clothing Can Help Reduce Mosquito Bites**

When possible, wear long-sleeves, long pants and socks when outdoors during peak mosquito activity time.

• **Apply Mosquito Repellent When You Go Outdoors**

A wide variety of mosquito repellent products are available. The most effective repellents contain **DEET** (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide), **Picaridin** (KBR 3023) or **Permethrin**.

Always follow the instructions on the product label. DEET and Picaridin products can be used directly on skin and on clothing. Permethrin products can be used on clothing but not directly on skin. Oil of lemon eucalyptus has also demonstrated efficacy against mosquito bites, with protection similar to repellents with low concentrations of DEET. Products containing DEET **should not** be used on children less than 2 months of age and should be used in concentrations of **30% or lower** for older children.

Apply only as much repellent as needed. Choose a product that will provide sufficient protection for the amount of time that you will be spending outdoors. Saturation does not increase repellent efficacy. Product labels often indicate the length of time that you can expect protection from a product. Keep repellents away from eyes, nostrils and lips: do not inhale or ingest repellents or get them into the eyes. Avoid applying repellents to portions of children's hands that are likely to have contact with eyes or mouth. Never use repellents on wounds or irritated skin. **Wash repellent-treated skin after coming indoors.**



MassHighway – Chapter 90 Program

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION, PRESERVATION AND IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS THAT CREATE OR EXTEND THE LIFE OF CAPITAL ROADWAY FACILITIES

The Chapter 90 Program was enacted on March 23, 1973 to entitle Municipalities to reimbursement of documented expenditures under the provisions of General Laws on approved Projects. The Funds provided from Transportation Bond Issues authorizes such Capital Improvement Projects for Highway Construction, Preservation and Improvement Projects that create or extend the

life of Capital Facilities as follows

These funds must be used in compliance with all applicable statutes and regulations, as applicable for maintaining, repairing, improving and constructing town and county ways and bridges which qualify under the State Aid Highway Guidelines adopted by the Public Works Commission.

Funds must be allocated to roadway projects, such as resurfacing and related work and other work incidental to the above such as preliminary engineering, roadside drainage, structures,

and for such other purposes as the MassHighway may specifically authorize. The municipality shall provide full documentation of compliance.

This program has been an important asset to Town of Westford in extending the life of its accepted roads, drainage structures and in helping to control the capital expenses of the Town's Highway Department. This Department will always follow the policy of securing the maximum financial assistance available to us under this and other state and federal programs.



OUTDOOR WATERING CONSERVATION POLICY

NOTICE TO WESTFORD WATER USERS

The Westford Water Department encourages residents to comply with the voluntary Even/Odd Outdoor Watering Policy. The Outdoor Watering Policy will be in effect May 1 through October 31, 2009. Properties with even numbered street addresses may water on even days of the month, and properties with odd numbered street addresses may water on odd days of the month. The policy can be found in

the General Bylaws of the Town under Chapter 169 (Chapter 169.7, sections D through H).

With the Outdoor Watering Policy, an important goal for the Water Department is to educate the public about how valuable water is as a natural resource and to instill a sense of responsibility in all Water Users. Please remember: established lawns only need 1 inch of water per week; water in the early morning or evening when evaporation rates are lowest; do not water during

rain; and avoid over watering, which actually creates a weak grass plant that cannot tolerate drought or pests. Use of hand-held hoses to water small gardens or new lawns or other plantings as needed, is not subject to this policy. We urge everyone to use water wisely this summer.



Generous Donors and Library Friends fund Mary Atwood Hall Makeover

Donors to the Friends of the J. V. Fletcher Library, Inc. Annual Appeal have made possible the refurbishment of the historic third-story Mary Atwood Hall. This space, named in recognition of a generous Lecture Fund gift from the late Mary Atwood, is site to over 600 free meetings per year, Camp Read-A-Lot, Pajama Story Times, and the library Special Collections. This beautiful oak and cypress room is being transformed with warm paint and carpet, restored period pendant lighting and a

trompe l'oeil (trick of the eye) treatment of the skylight which was covered in the 1960's. Work is beginning from the top down – electricians have already hung the new pendant lights, installed new high hats, replaced the old fluorescent bulbs and ballasts, and uncovered the original skylit cove ceiling in the Mary Atwood Hall. This room will be changing daily and weekly through the month of May with new wall paint and carpet finally tying the look together. We celebrate the

generosity from both private donors and the Friends of the J. V. Fletcher Library, Inc. which has made this renovation possible, and hope to transform this space with the least possible impact on patrons and programs.

